DC

21

HARLEY QUINN

PHILLIPS
BUONFANTINO
FAJARDO JR.

TASK FORCE XX
PART 4!

AGES 13+
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WITNESS THE BIRTH OF THE NEW DC MULTIVERSE!

DARK CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS #4

WRITTEN BY
JOSHUA WILLIAMSON

ART BY
DANIEL SAMPERE

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DC'S BLOCKBUSTER EVENT
CONTINUES THIS SEPTEMBER

- ☐ DARK CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS #4
- ☐ THE FLASH #786
- ☐ DARK CRISIS: YOUNG JUSTICE #4
- ☐ DARK CRISIS: WORLDS WITHOUT A JUSTICE LEAGUE - WONDER WOMAN #1

WHY WOULD YOU RUN...?

JACE ALWAYS USED TO WANT TO PLAY **SOLDIER** WHEN WE WERE KIDS.

...ARE YOU **ASHAMED** OF ME...?

HE'D TAKE HIS BB GUN AND ENLIST ME TO PLAY THE PART OF SOME UNKNOWN, UNNAMED BAD GUY.

TASK FORCE XX

CHAPTER 4

WRITER STEPHANIE PHILLIPS
ARTIST SIMONE BUONFANTINO
COLORS ROMULO FAJARDO JR.
LETTERS ANDWORLD DESIGN
COVER JONBOY MEYERS
VARIANT COVER DERRICK CHEW
RATIO VARIANT COVER ZU ORZU
EDITOR BEN ABERNATHY
HARLEY QUINN CREATED BY
PAUL DINI AND BRUCE TIMM

...ARE YOU ASHAMED OF WHAT YOU'VE **CREATED,** LUKE?

THOSE LITTLE PELLETS HE SHOT AT ME WOULD LEAVE BRUISES FOR A WEEK...

...BUT IT MADE HIM **HAPPY.**

WHAM

LUKE, LUKE, LUKE... THE MOON WAS A **LONELY** PLACE.

I TRIED YOGA. I LEARNED ABOUT WHAT YOU ON EARTH CALL THE **SPICE GIRLS.**

BUT PERHAPS **MOST** INTERESTING OF ALL...

JACE WAS NEVER HAPPIER THAN WHEN HE WAS OPPOSING SOME MADE-UP, WORLD-ENDING **EVIL.**

JACE VERSUS HIS OWN PERCEIVED **INJUSTICES.**

...I LEARNED ABOUT **YOU,** LUKE...

...OR SHOULD I SAY **BATWING?**

HE ALWAYS KNEW **WHAT** HE WANTED TO BE--**WHO** HE WANTED TO BE.

WHAK

WHAT DO YOU **WANT?**

THAT'S **SIMPLE...**

BUT ME?

...WHAT I WANT, WHAT I *REALLY, REALLY* WANT...

...IS *CHAOS.*

BLAM

THE YEAR JACE GOT THAT BB GUN FOR CHRISTMAS...

BLAM

...I GOT A TELESCOPE.

SPAKT

UNGH!

ALMOST THERE...

DON'T RUN, LUKE...

I'M **PROUD** OF JACE AND HIS CONVICTION...

...THE WAY HE BELIEVES SO FIRMLY IN JUSTICE... BUT I CAN'T HELP WONDERING...

...WHOSE JUSTICE?

I NEED YOUR HELP DECIDING WHAT I SHOULD DO FIRST WITH MY NEW FRIENDS!

KRAK

OOF!

JACE AND I BOTH BECAME SOLDIERS...

MAYBE WE COULD FIGHT THE MIGHTY JUSTICE LEAGUE...

...OH, WAIT. I ALMOST FORGOT.

THEY'RE DEAD!

YEAH, WELL THE DEAD LEAVE A ***LEGACY.*** AS BATMAN ALWAYS SAID...

...BUT I NEVER FELT COMFORTABLE FIGHTING SOMEONE ***ELSE'S*** WAR.

FASHOOM

...NEVER LEAVE HOME WITHOUT AT LEAST ***TWO*** FLASH GRENADES.

ARGH!

BATMAN, NIGHTWING, SIGNAL, ROBIN...

...THOSE ARE THEIR **IDENTITIES.**

SYSTEMS LOOK... **OPERATIONAL!**

COSTUMES THAT HAVE BECOME MORE LIKE **SKIN.**

WELCOME, LUKE FOX.

BUT **BATWING** FELT LIKE...LIKE A SCRIPTED ROLE IN SOME LOCAL THEATER PRODUCTION ABOUT SUPERHEROES.

HOW RUDE, LUKE!

COME ON...

I TOLD HARLEY QUINN THAT I STOPPED BELIEVING THAT **BATWING** IS WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS...

THAT'S A QUOTE FROM A 1990s SITCOM. I WATCHED AND MEMORIZED **EVERY** EPISODE WHILE YOU HAD ME **TRAPPED** ON THE MOON--!

...BUT THE TRUTH IS THAT I STOPPED BELIEVING THAT BATWING IS WHAT **I** NEED.

"LUKE ISN'T RESPONDING..."

DEFUNCT J.L.A. MOON BASE.

...WE CAN'T KEEP WAITING FOR HIS ORDERS...

...IF THAT MONSTER *THING* COULD USE THE TELEPORTER TO GET OFF THE MOON, THEN I SAY WE CAN, TOO.

DO YOU EVEN KNOW IF THAT'S *SAFE,* BEN?

BESIDES, HOW DO WE FIND IT...?

WE KNOW THE MONSTER *TELEPORTED*...BUT WE DON'T KNOW IF IT *WORKED*...OR WHERE THE HELL IT WENT...

WHY WOULD WE *WANT* TO *FIND* IT, FROST?

IF WE GET OFF THE MOON...I'M NOT GOING AFTER THAT...*CREATURE.*

YOUR ENTIRE *VERDICT* PERSONA IS ABOUT SOME KIND OF CRUSADE TO RIGHT THE WRONGS OF INJUSTICE, OR WHATEVER...BUT YOU DON'T THINK SAVING THE WORLD FROM AN ALIEN MONSTER IS A *WRONG* THAT NEEDS TO BE *RIGHTED?*

BEEP DEET BEEP

I THINK IT'S A *WRONG* THAT WILL GET US ALL *KILLED* IF WE GO NEAR IT AGAIN.

THIS ARGUMENT DOESN'T MATTER IF WE CAN'T EVEN FIGURE OUT *HOW* TO WORK THE TELEPORTER--

HARLEY?

FWOOSH

ANYONE GOT SOMETHING ELSE GOOD WE CAN PUT IN THIS BABY...?

MAYBE AN *ACTUAL* BABY? THAT'D BE FUN...

HOW DID YOU *DO* THAT...?

...*WHERE* DID YOU SEND IT?

I HIT THE GREEN ONE.

AND THIS THING SAVED THE LAST LOCATION OF TELEPORTATION... SO I'D GUESS THE BATSY STATUE IS NOW CHILLIN' WITH OUR MONSTER PAL.

SORRY... LET ME EXPLAIN. THE TELEPORTER IS LIKE A *COMPUTER* THAT STORES YOUR SEARCH HISTORY... ONLY IT'S STORIN' PAST LOCATIONS--

I *KNOW* HOW A SEARCH HISTORY WORKS, HARLEY.

YOU *DO*? HONESTLY...YOU KINDA LOOK LIKE YOU STILL USE *DIAL-UP*.

DON'T LAUGH, FROST. YOU'RE JUST ENCOURAGING HER.

HE'S RIGHT. I AM *VERY* ENCOURAGED BY THE VALIDATION OF OTHERS. THANKS FOR NOTICIN', BENNY-BEAR.

THIS *COULD* WORK...WE COULD FOLLOW THE MONSTER...FINISH THE MISSION.

AND IF WE CAN'T *FIGHT* IT?

I DUNNO, SAM. BUT I DO KNOW THAT BEFORE THIS... BEFORE WORKING WITH YOU ALL, I DIDN'T REALLY HAVE MUCH OF A PURPOSE.

DOING SOMETHING FEELS RIGHT.

I... I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.

COME ON, CAITLIN...JUST *ONE* ARM! THE ONE YOU LIKE LEAST.

I'M *NOT* GOING TO TELEPORT JUST MY ARM, HARLEY.

WEREN'T YOU A *SCIENTIST...?* AREN'T YOU A *LITTLE* CURIOUS ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS IF WE TELEPORT YOUR ARM? I'M *SURE* WE CAN GET IT BACK...

ALL RIGHT, KNOCK IT OFF...

...WE'VE GOT AN *ALIEN INVASION* TO STOP.

YOU'RE GOING TO TRUST *HER* TO TELEPORT US?

YES. I AM.

YOU ARE, TOO.

YEAH, VERDICT, YOU'RE GONNA TRUST ME TO DISINTEGRATE ALL YOUR MOLECULAR MATERIAL AND THEN TRANSFER THAT MATERIAL TO EARTH WHERE YOU WILL BE REASSEMBLED WITH ***DEFINITELY*** NO ISSUES...

...BUT HOPEFULLY A ***BETTER*** ATTITUDE.

WE SHOULD HOLD HANDS.

WHY WOULD WE DO ***THAT?***

YOU KNOW...TAKING A ***LEAP OF FAITH*** INTO THE UNKNOWN AND ALL THAT.

OH, &%*#! I'M WEARING ***RED!*** EVERYONE KNOWS YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO WEAR RED ON A--

WHOOSH

KRRRRK

FWSSSH

DID IT WORK...?

...I THINK IT WORKED.

OH NO! MY EARS... WHERE ARE MY--?

THEY'RE HERE! EVERYTHING'S FINE.

WELL, MAYBE NOT EVERYTHING...

...WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?

HI, GANG! LONG TIME NO SEE.

MAYBE... *BEARTH...?* I'LL KEEP WORKING ON IT.

I'D SAY WELCOME TO *EARTH*...BUT ONCE I CONQUER IT, I'LL DEFINITELY BE RENAMING THE PLACE.

THESE SOLDIERS... LET THEM GO. THEY'RE INNOCENT.

INNOCENT...?

...I CAN SEE INTO THEIR MINDS. THEY *AREN'T* INNOCENT.

BUT A BEING FROM ANOTHER PLANET, SOLD AND EXPERIMENTED ON BEFORE BEING *BANISHED* TO THE MOON... *I* WAS INNOCENT...

...NOW I'M JUST *PISSED.*

CONSUME THEM, FRIENDS... I'LL FIND LUKE.

LOOK OUT!

DON'T KILL THEM!

THEIR HOSTS MIGHT STILL BE IN THERE...

YEAH? WELL, THEY SURE AREN'T SHOWING *US* THE SAME &#$%@$ COURTESY, BEN...

BLAM

...UNGH...

DID YOU HEAR WHAT IT SAID ABOUT LUKE...? HE MIGHT STILL BE ALIVE--

*#@&!

FWSSSH

I NEVER JOINED THE MILITARY...

...AND I AIN'T ABOUT TO LET THE MILITARY JOIN ME!

WHAM

$&*#!

THANKS.

DON'T MENTION IT.

KRAK

HUH. WELL, I DO LOVE A GOOD *CALLBACK.*

THEY JUST KEEP COMING...

THNK

KZZZLP

OUT COLD. TOO BAD...I REALLY THOUGHT THERE WAS A SPARK BETWEEN US.

THUNK

WHERE'D THAT COME FROM?

WE HAVE TO MOVE FAST...

...THEY WON'T BE OUT FOR LONG.

LUKE?!

WELL, THIS IS *SHOCKING.*

THE REINFORCEMENTS AND SECURITY BACK AT MY LAB WILL KEEP THEM OUT...

"...FOR NOW."

WELL...?

I'M SORRY.

I TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR *EVERYTHING* THAT HAS HAPPENED.

I THOUGHT... I THOUGHT IT WAS THE RIGHT THING.

BY TRYING TO CLEAN UP YOUR OWN MESS, YOU MADE IT *EXPONENTIALLY* WORSE.

LIKE WHEN A ROOMBA RUNS OVER DOG POOP...

...YOU'VE NEVER SEEN THE VIDEOS? THEY'RE *HILARIOUS.*

THOSE LITTLE VACUUMS THAT YOU EXPECT TO CLEAN YOUR HOUSE, YOU KNOW? ONE OF 'EM RUNS OVER SOME DOG POO AND THEN SMEARS IT *EVERYWHERE...*

YOU'RE LIKE A *POO ROOMBA,* LUKE.

THAT'S *DISGUSTING.*

POINT IS, LUKE, THIS IS *YOUR* MISSION.

HOW THE HELL ARE WE SUPPOSED TO FIX THIS?

I...

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

I WILL FIGURE IT OUT... *I PROMISE...*

...I JUST... I NEED A MOMENT.

GREAT.

I TOLD YOU THIS WAS A BAD IDEA...

"...HE'S GOING TO GET US ALL KILLED."

DAMMIT!

AS HE GAZES UPON THE *OBVIOUS* SYMBOL OF HIS FRUSTRATION...

...LUKE FOX CONTEMPLATES HIS OWN *FRACTURED IDENTITY.*

IS HE A BILLIONAIRE TECH MOGUL?

PERHAPS A CRIME-FIGHTING VIGILANTE WORKING WITH THE BAT-FAMILY?

OR...IS HE SOMETHING *BRAND NEW?*

HARLEY, THIS IS NOT THE TIME--

SEE, THE INTERESTING THING ABOUT ***IDENTITY,*** LUKEY, IS THAT ***YOU*** GET TO CHOOSE THAT FOR YOURSELF.

I'VE STUDIED PERSONALITY... DID MY WHOLE DISSERTATION ON IT, ACTUALLY...

I READ IT.

YOU... ***READ IT...?***

NO ONE READS THOSE THINGS.

WELL, YOU ASKED IMPORTANT QUESTIONS. ARE WE THE THINGS WE DO...OR IS THERE MORE TO IDENTITY AND PERSONALITY THAN OUR ***ACTIONS?***

CONTESTED TOPIC.

YOUR ANSWER IS NO.

I BELIEVE THERE'S FAR MORE TO INDIVIDUALITY... TO ***PERSONALITIES...*** THAN SIMPLY HOBBIES OR COLLECTIVE INTERESTS.

I BELIEVED IT THEN...AND I ***HAVE*** TO BELIEVE IT NOW.

OTHERWISE, MY WHOLE ***REDEMPTION ARC*** WOULD BE A REAL DRAG.

BUT THE ***MOST*** IMPORTANT QUESTION...

...ARE WE GONNA TALK ABOUT THIS WHOLE NEW ***FOXY*** COSTUME THING, OR...?

AND NO JUDGMENTS FROM ME. WE LOVE A MAN WHO CAN PULL OFF A QUICK COSTUME CHANGE...ESPECIALLY WITH ONE THAT ***TIGHT-FITTING...***

AFTER I GAVE UP ON ***BATWING***...THERE WAS A BRIEF TIME I THOUGHT I COULD STILL WEAR A COSTUME.

IT JUST WOULDN'T HAVE A ***BAT*** ON IT.

I WANTED TO DO THE RIGHT THING.

AND NOW I HAVE TWO PEOPLE CONSUMED BY SOME ALIEN MONSTER AND A ROOM FULL OF PEOPLE WAITING FOR ***ME*** TO TELL THEM WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO...

I DON'T KNOW THAT I CAN DO THAT.

YOU CAN.

YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE GOOD AT HOMEWORK...I READ ABOUT ***YOU.***

YOU'RE AN ***ACTUAL*** GENIUS. I MEAN...YOU BUILT A FREAKIN' ***SPACESHIP.***

BESIDES, IF YOU ***DON'T*** FIGURE OUT A PLAN...WE ***WILL*** BE CONSUMED BY THIS WEIRD ALIEN CREATURE THAT MAKES AN ***ODD*** AMOUNT OF POP-CULTURE REFERENCES.

THAT IS ***WEIRD,*** RIGHT?

THANKS, HARLEY. I THINK I HAVE AN IDEA.

WAIT... LUKE...

WHAT'S YOUR ***NAME?*** YOU KNOW...IF YOU'RE NOT BATWING ANYMORE...?

WELL, LIKE ME, I GUESS THAT'S A ***WORK IN PROGRESS,*** TOO.

I UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS MY FAULT...THAT YOU'RE ALL ANGRY WITH ME.

YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO BE, AND IF YOU'D LIKE TO WALK OUT THE DOOR WITH YOUR MONEY RIGHT NOW, I WON'T STOP YOU.

IF YOU CHOOSE TO STAY...THE FIGHT WON'T BE EASY...THE PLAN ***WILL*** BE MESSY. WE'RE DEALING WITH SOMETHING NONE OF US HAVE ***EVER*** EXPERIENCED...

BUT I CAN AT LEAST TRY TO ***EVEN*** THE PLAYING FIELD...

"...WHEN I FIRST RECRUITED YOU, I STARTED WORK ON WEAPON PROTOTYPES FOR THE MISSION. THEY ARE...***UNTESTED***...BUT I GUESS NO BETTER TIME THAN THE PRESENT.

"BRONZE TIGER, THIS STAFF HAS ELECTRICAL CURRENTS IN THE ENDS THAT CAN HELP YOU INCAPACITATE THE ENEMY.

"VERDICT, THESE GUNS WILL PROJECT AN ELECTRICAL PULSE TO HELP KNOCK OUT THESE ALIENS FROM A DISTANCE.

"HARD TO FIND AN ADEQUATE ***UPGRADE*** FOR ***KILLER*** FROST, BUT THESE BRACERS SHOULD HELP EXTEND THE REACH AND REGENERATION OF YOUR NATURAL ABILITIES...

"AND FINALLY--"

WHEN I TOOK OFF THE BATWING COSTUME, I THOUGHT IT WAS BECAUSE I DIDN'T WANT TO BE A MAN FIGHTING BEHIND SOMEONE ELSE'S **SYMBOL**...

...BUT I AM MORE THAN THE **LOGO** ON MY CHEST OR THE SUPERHERO ALIAS USED IN THE NEWSPAPER.

I AM A COLLECTION. OF IDEAS AND IDEALS... OF EXPERIENCES AND KNOWLEDGE...

...AND OF THE PEOPLE I **CHOOSE** TO HAVE AT MY SIDE.

YEAH, YEAH... SWING THE GIANT MALLET AT THE BAD ALIENS...

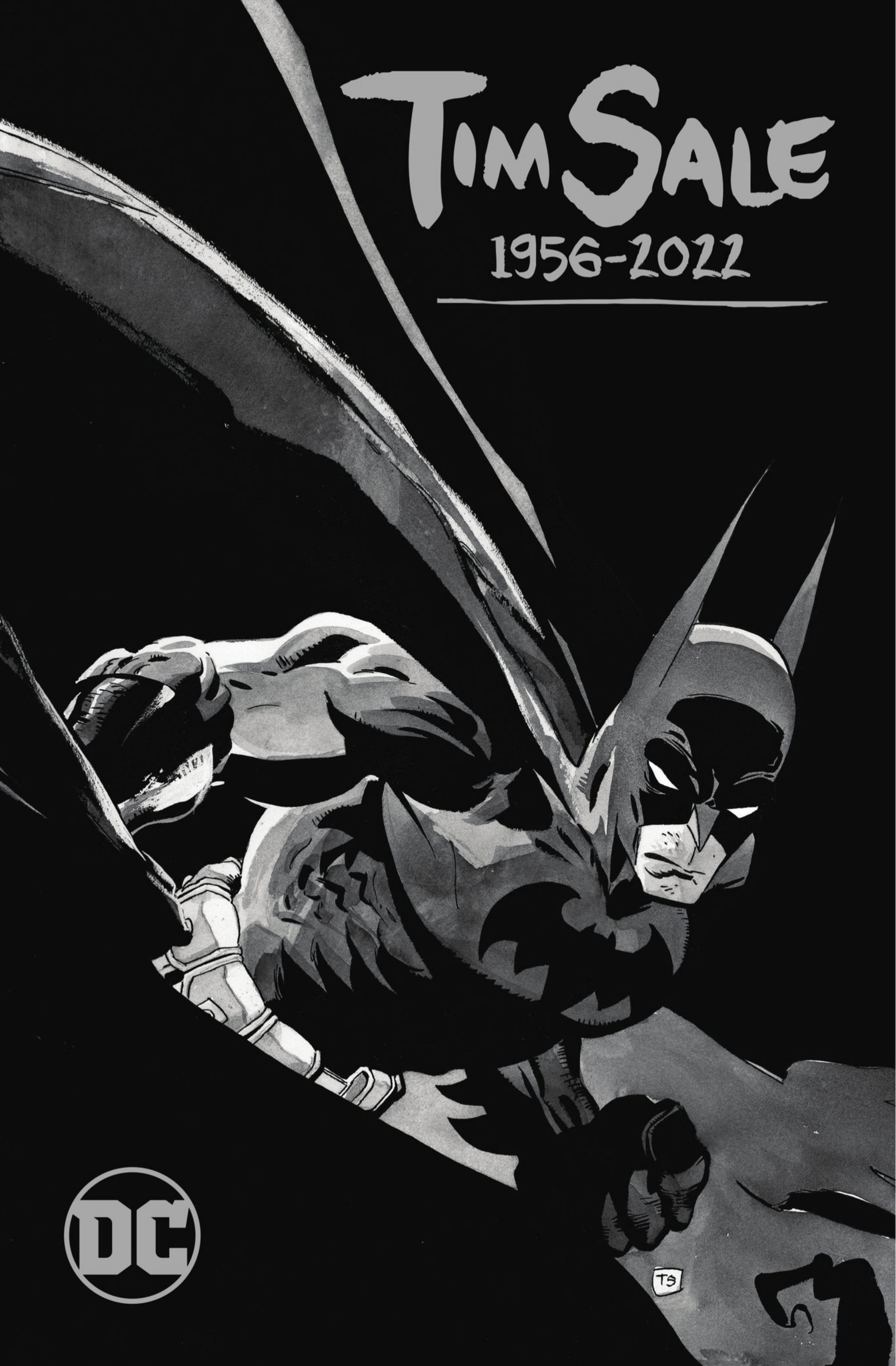
...I THINK I CAN HANDLE THAT!

THEN LET'S GO SAVE THE WORLD, TEAM.

TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE HARLEY QUINN ANNUAL

TIM SALE

1956-2022



DC

Tim Sale left us on June 16, 2022. We were two kids who started out on DC's *Challengers of the Unknown* and over the next 30 years, he took my stories for *Batman* and *Superman* and others and made them magical. He told stories in a way that it all seemed breezy but was anything but that. It was his gift. His artwork was about creating atmosphere through shadows and angles and expression and believe it or not, desks. He drew the best desks--desks that told you what the character valued like if Tim was an art director in a film. He loved comics, baseball, the Beatles, old movies, music, noir, food, his dogs, his fans, and most of all, the love of his life, Suzy. He was kind and funny and an inspiration as to how to live one's life.
I miss you, my pal.

JEPH LOEB

I've never met an artist as talented, skilled, smart, and charming as Tim. We spent a million hours talking about Norman Rockwell, Alex Toth, Ichiro, and Creedence Clearwater Revival. A *Master* storyteller, Tim Sale's art and life were a wonder to behold.

MARK CHIARELLO

Tim was not only a consummate artist and innovative creator, he was also, above all, a sensitive, kind, and loyal friend. If you ever talked to him in person, or on the phone, you knew him to be thoughtful and considerate and always genuinely interested in what you had to say. He always had time for fans and fellow professionals alike, and when he found out I was going to be alone in a new state on my birthday in 2018, he flew out from Seattle to Chattanooga to hang out and eat Mexican food together. That is the Tim I will miss most of all.

RICHARD STARKINGS

Tim Sale was an amazing artist, draftsman, and storyteller. He had that special kind of talent you encounter once in a generation. I'm convinced his work stood out because he was simply fearless. He didn't care that his work looked different from the mainstream house styles. Beyond the taut chiaroscuro style which became his trademark, Tim clearly put a premium on storytelling, clarity, and pacing--cherishing emotion above all. His stories were beautifully visceral and nuanced and evinced deep humanity. Tim simply had no use for surface banality. He was such a sweet, kind, and good-natured soul. I feel fortunate to have called him a friend and will miss him beyond words.

JIM LEE

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Swords. Sorcery. Superheroes. A new DC Universe is born.

DARK KNIGHTS OF STEEL

"A fully-fleshed out world that feels familiar yet intrinsically different... unlike anything else DC has published in recent history." —comicbook.com

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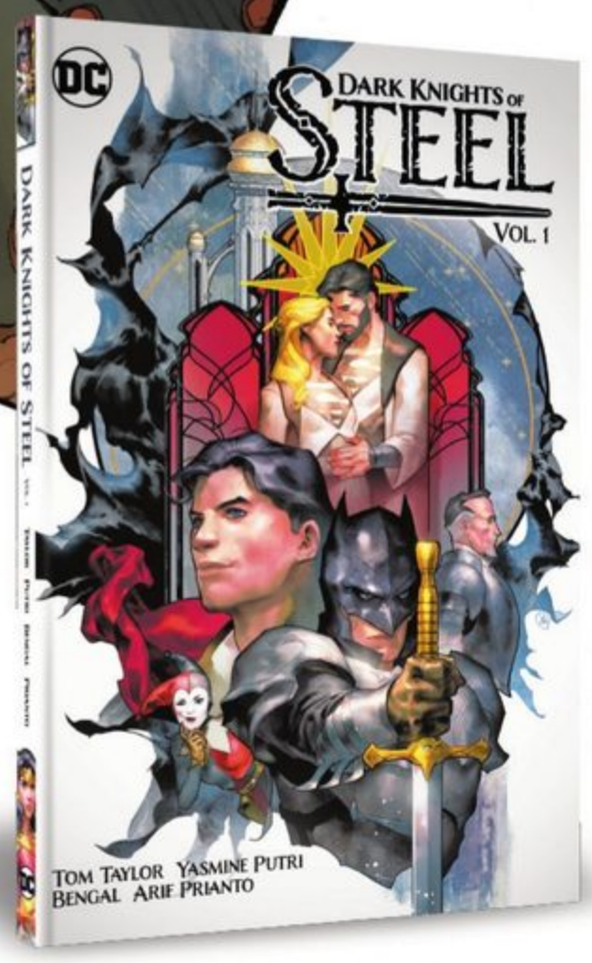

Written by TOM TAYLOR
Art by YASMINE PUTRI

The first volume of
the high-fantasy epic,
now in hardcover!

September

DC NATION SPOTLIGHT ON

DARK CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS

DON'T MISS
DARK CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS #4,
ON SALE IN SEPTEMBER!

Nope, that's not a misprint in the logo up there—DC's blockbuster event *Darh Crisis* is now *Darh Crisis on Infinite Earths* as of September's issue #4, and Joshua Williamson and Daniel Sampere's epic has been revealed as the official sequel to the game-changing *Crisis on Infinite Earths* event. Hear directly from Williamson and Sampere about what to expect from this shift, and following up on Marv Wolfman and George Pérez's seminal reality-shattering epic.

WHY *DARK CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS*?

Joshua Williamson: This is something we've been keeping secret from the very beginning of this book—even when we first announced it, we never told anybody what the real title was.

The book is actually called *Dark Crisis on Infinite Earths*. There's a major moment in *Dark Crisis* #4 where the infinite Earths return. The rest of the series is about what that means to the rest of the DC Universe.

To be a sequel to *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, to carry forward that story with Pariah and the infinite Earths, has been awesome. This is not about any kind of reboot or rewriting history. It's about characters.

Daniel Sampere: I still can't believe it. When I knew this was going to happen, it was like, whoa—are we going to do this for real?

I'm the artist on the series, but I'm also a huge fan of DC. When I check *Crisis on Infinite Earths* for reference, it's unreal. I'm using this as source material for what we're doing now.

WHAT DO READERS HAVE TO LOOK FORWARD TO WITH THE TITLE CHANGE?

Sampere: We've been building the mysteries of this story—and at this point the big action, the big epicness you expect from a *Crisis* is coming. It's going to be a lot of fun.

Williamson: The first three issues of *Darh Crisis*, we definitely wanted to take our time with the characters, and we wanted it to be a bit of a slow burn getting these characters into place. Once we get to issue #4, it's a wild roller coaster. It is nonstop action, humongous beats, humongous moments in the DCU, huge fights with villains versus villains, and the heroes having to go up against the biggest dangers they've ever faced.

The ending of this series is so massive, and will have a major impact on the DC Universe moving forward.

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ZONE